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Music festival to celebrate unity

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Unity is the theme for this Saturday's free music festival on the grounds of WABG-AM radio — the little white shack with the big antenna out on Money Road in Greenwood.

Station owner-manager James Poe said the idea came to him and some local musicians after the violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, a few weeks back.

"We were looking to do something out here anyway when Charlottesville happened," Poe said. "Being we're here in Mississippi, here in the Delta, where we've had so much racial strife over the years, I thought what could it hurt to celebrate our unity with live music?"



Poe estimates his listeners at ⁹⁶⁰90.6 on the AM dial are about 50-50 white and black. Until we stop making those racial distinctions, he said, "we have to work to make it better.

“You can’t change the world, but at the same time you can change a small part of it, one step at a time.”

Musical guests at the free concert, which will be broadcast live, include gospel singer and well-known “Mississippi Songbird” Dorothy McClung-Lewis of Columbus.

Burlap Rebellion, an Americana band out of Belzoni, will perform, as well as Mississippi Marshall, a “big guy with a soft touch on the guitar,” according to Poe.

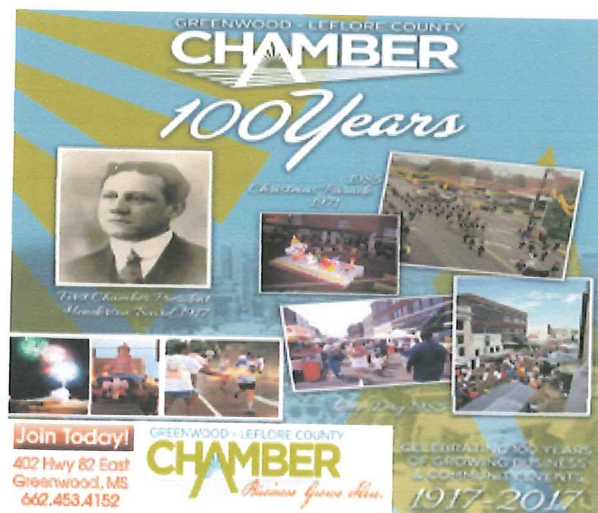
“If B.B. King were white, (Marshall) would be B.B. King.”

Local band Southern Cafe, featuring Steve Kelly and Dudley Pleasants, will take the stage, and Poe has invited a number of other musicians from the Clarksdale area and around the Delta.

Anyone local who wants to take the stage will be invited to come up and participate in an open mic session that Poe hopes will showcase an abundance of local talent.

Music will be performed on the Poe-and-Beth-Cartwright-Luckett-Block stage, named for supporters of the station, including plantation owner Billy Whittington, whose fields surround the station.

“He drives up and down and all around the place like Ben Cartwright on the Ponderosa,” said Poe — thus the nickname.



Saturday's event is free and open to the public. Guests are invited to bring their own chairs and coolers for drinks. Bo's Barbecue of Greenwood will be on site providing food for purchase.

Poe said he's working on getting the grass nice and short around the stage before the weekend, but visitors are advised to bring mosquito repellent. Music will begin at 3 p.m. and won't end until the last musician is finished.

Poe said his station represents international unity with fans from around the world, including number one Japanese fan Ako Shichiji of Tokyo, who will be in Greenwood this week to attend B.B. King Day events at Mississippi Valley State University and the Money Road Unity Festival on Saturday.

Ground Zero Blues Club of Clarksdale is a sponsor of the event.

•Contact Kathryn Eastburn at 581-7235 or keastburn@gwcommonwealth.com.




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